

Approved Minutes of the Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting March 27, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 PM.

Attending Committee Members were: Bob Dorer, Soraya Stevens, Margot Fleischman, AnnaLisa Madison, Dan Silverman, Shawn Hannegan

- Meeting minutes from 2-27-14 were amended and accepted.
- Town Meeting Review – transportation related topics
 - The pedestrian master plan was approved.
 - Renzo’s intersection: Selectmen recommended “fresh eyes” to analyze the intersection and make recommendation.
- Reminder: Parking New Ideas workshop is on April 8th.
- Margot attended the Middlesex 3 (M3) Coalition development event on 3/26. Margot and Trish Domigan informally discussed parking issues along the M3 corridor. Margot suggested ideas for using Depot Park and Middlesex Community College overflow parking existing parking lots as park & ride access to the 62 bus.
- Margot had an informal discussion with Michelle Ciccolo, MAPC. Michelle mentioned that Arlington is considering a Hubway-style bike sharing system along Minuteman bike trail. Margot suggested that Bedford should consider participating in a similar system. Margot added that it might be good to bring Zipcar-style car sharing to Bedford. Park & ride parking could encourage use of car sharing programs in Bedford. If concerns were expressed about inadvertent endorsing of a private company (such as Zipcar), Bob suggested those concerns could be alleviated by using general “car sharing” language on parking signs instead of using a private company name.
- Margot and Dan noted there is a parking problem around town common. Future development efforts should factor in the parking in and around town common. It has been noted that some cars are parked in the center of town the entire day, presumable for commuters to access to the 62 bus. Expand parking to North and South of center of town to divert commuter parking out of town common.
- Margot: Selectmen planning board updates - no transportation related topics to report.

- Shawn: Planning board updates:
 - Planning board will look at ways to implement the Great Road Master Plan over the next few weeks. Margot: We need to look for opportunities to make progress on the Great Road Master Plan? Progress tends to slow down when it gets to the “bury the utilities” step. This year would be good to have a discussion on how to phase or prioritize projects. Maybe look at the Bacon/Hillside area as low-hanging fruit since those utilities are already buried. It would be good to bundle some Great Road Master Plan projects with new developments. Bob: Note that the Great Road Master Plan is on the DPW website. Margot: Note that there were 3-4 public meetings reviewing and discussing the plan.
 - The affordable housing unit at the VA was approved. It will house 70 residents in 4-story development. Will there be any transportation related needs? Most residents will not be in private cars as many of them will be disabled. The residents will likely be using buses. Shawn suggested that they could perhaps use the BLT. Margot pointed out that the BLT was already operating at or close to capacity, so hopefully the VA will provide transportation options to the new residents.
- Review of the materials AnnaLisa circulated on the Lex-Connect Voucher Taxi Service
 - Summary: The voucher system works by seniors paying \$3 for a voucher. There are three travel zones that require one, two, or three vouchers for a one-way trip. It allows seniors to have dedicated on-demand direct transportation within Lexington and neighboring communities. The town subsidizes the program. Each voucher costs the town \$10. The spreadsheet indicates that only half of the purchased vouchers end up being used, so the actual subsidy paid by the town ends up being less than the \$7 planned.
 - Soraya mentioned that the net price of the taxi rate for in-town travel seemed steep: \$20 round trip in-town or \$60 for a round-trip ride two towns away. Bob reminded the group that these are dedicated taxi’s that are operating on-demand for an underserved population. Bob also pointed out that the system encourages sharing a ride – each ride costs a fixed number of vouchers no matter how many passengers are in the taxi.

- Margot pointed out that it will be interesting to observe the outcome of any re-bidding of the LexConnect program to determine if other taxi companies will compete to participate in the program, which could potentially reduce the cost to the town. If other companies view this as a successful and profitable program, then there might be more price competition when the contract is up for rebid.
- Bob pointed out that the number of vouchers sold has increased each year, indicating that more residents are participating in the program.
- The question was asked if Bedford should consider developing a similar service for seniors. Attendees discussed the question.
 - There is no dedicated on-demand transportation for seniors who might otherwise be homebound.
 - BLT stops at 3pm, does not operate on weekends, and only transports within town, which limits the transportation options for seniors.
 - Bedford has two taxi companies that operate in town.
 - Margot: Lorie Wittner, director of Bedford Council on Aging, would be able to come to the Selectmen's meeting and could speak to the transportation needs of the seniors.
 - Lorie is looking into funding sources for this type of program.
- A Motion was made to recommend to the selectmen that Bedford consider a pilot program similar to the Lex-Connect Taxi Service. It passed unanimously.
 - This program would be serving an unserved market.
 - We might want to engage the VA if their residents might make use of this type of program.
 - Another advantage of this program is that it can take seniors beyond the Bedford line (access to medical facilities – Mass General in Waltham, Emerson, Lahey Clinic).
 - If the taxi service is successful then BLT use might become more available for other uses such as routing families to recreational activities.

- Bob will send this recommendation to the Selectmen.
- Margot will work with Lorie to get a copy of the Lexington RFP.
- Discussion of the intersection near Renzo's Salon
 - Dan: Mike Rosenberg suggests we continue pushing on the Renzo intersection project to make sure it gets acted on soon.
 - Margot: Selectmen would really like to have a progressive engineering firm look at the intersection, perhaps with more expertise in alternative transportation methods to bring a fresh perspective.
 - Soraya: Who is tasked with finding and choosing the Engineering Firm used? Margot and Bob: DPW will choose the Engineering firm. Soraya: If the Selectmen want to encourage the use of new engineering firms, maybe someone (TAC?) should give DPW suggestions of some firms that are using more alternative transportation management methods so they aren't burdened with looking for new firms, which they will likely not have time to do, especially if the project needs to move forward quickly. Margot recommended anyone interested in learning about available engineering firms and their specialties should attend the Mass DOT conference in the Spring.
 - Shawn: How quickly can this get done? Dan: The study and design should be quick and easy, but getting the work done could take a year or longer.
 - Margot: The only thing that might slow things down is if there needs to be negotiations with the property owner.
- Shawn: Has anyone looked at the Page Road intersection? It is difficult to navigate between Brooksbie and the bridge near Shawsheen. Bob: the solution for that stretch of road is strictly enforcing the 25mph speed limit in that area, which the town does. In a past effort, the Page/Brooksbie intersection got a lot of attention, some of the problems were visibility – trees were taken down.
- Upcoming TAC Meetings
 - April 17th (1 week early due to school vacation week)
 - May 22nd

- June 26th
- Bob reminded the group that June 26th will be his last meeting.
- For the April meeting:
 - Shawn will bring any transportation related action items for the comprehensive plan to the next TAC meeting.
 - Bob will send the link around for the Great Road Master Plan
 - Debrief of April 8th parking summit
- Follow-up question about the Bedford Shopping Center project
 - Margot: The town approved the project, but the demolition and development never happened due to the economy. Now that new businesses have opened in the existing buildings, it is unlikely that the project will move forward as approved at this point.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Soraya Stevens